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cut B1

cooked cereal mass or dough having discernible grain bits from the free cereal grain pieces of step A, said forming step including adding sufficient amounts of moisture to provide the cooked cereal dough with a moisture content of about 21 to 35%; and

- C. immediately thereafter, subjecting the cooked cereal dough to a second cooking step at a temperature of about 120 to about 194°C (248 to 380°F) for about 15 to 45 minutes to form an extended time cooked cereal dough having said discernible grain bits dispersed therein.

*A1 to volume
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2. (Once Amended) The method of claim 1 additionally comprising the steps of:
forming the cooked cereal dough into pellets each weighing about 0.25 to 10g;
and
drying the pellets to a moisture content of about 8% to 14%.
3. (Once Amended) The method of claim 2 additionally comprising the step of:
rapidly heating the pellets to provide puffed finished grain based snacks.

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6. (Once Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein steps B and C are practiced to provide the dough with a Specific Mechanical Energy ("SME") value of less than 35 watt-hours/kg of dough.
7. (Once Amended) The method of claim 3 wherein the rapid heating includes deep fat frying to provide fried puffed grain based snacks having a fat content of about 15 to 40% by weight.

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11. (Once Amended) The method of claim 4 wherein the steeping substep is performed with intermittent agitation.
12. (Once Amended) The method of claim 11 additionally comprising the step of extruding the extended time cooked cereal dough into at least one dough rope extrudate.
13. (Once Amended) The method of claim 12 wherein Step B is practiced in a twin screw extruder and has a duration of about 0.1 to 3 minutes.

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15. (Once Amended) The method of claim 14 additionally comprising the step of tempering the extended time cooked cereal dough ropes for a duration of about 1

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A4 to 5 minutes while cooling from about 93.3-104.5°C (200-220°F) to about 54.4-76.6°C (130-170°F).

17. (Once Amended) The method of claim 15 additionally comprising the step of size reducing the cooled and tempered extended time cooked cereal dough to form pieces of about 2 to 8 mm.

A5 18. (Once Amended) The method of claim 17 additionally comprising the step of sheeting the cooled and tempered extended time cooked cereal dough pieces using sheeting rolls to form a continuous cooled and tempered extended time cooked cereal dough sheet.

19. (Once Amended) The method of claim 18 additionally comprising the step of forming the continuous cooled and tempered extended time cooked cereal dough sheet into at least one ribbon.

20. (Once Amended) The method of claim 19 additionally comprising cutting the ribbon into a plurality of ribbons.

A6 22. (Once Amended) The method of claim 3 wherein the finished puffed grain based snacks have a fat content of about 25% to 35%.

24. (Once Amended) The method of claim 2 wherein the pellet forming step involves feeding at least one ribbon of two plies of cooked cereal dough into a rotary cutter.

25. (Once Amended) The method of claim 3 additionally comprising the step of applying a topical seasoning to the puffed finished grain based snack.

A7 26. (Once Amended) The method of claim 25 wherein steps B and C are practiced to provide the dough with a Specific Mechanical Energy ("SME") value of about 10 to 25 watt-hours/kg of cooked dough.

27. (Once Amended) The method of claim 12 wherein the dough extrusion step is practiced to form a plurality of cooked dough ropes each having a diameter of about 3 to 25 mm.

28. (Once Amended) The method of claim 3 wherein the rapid heating includes microwave heating.

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A7 29. (Once Amended) The method of claim 3 wherein the rapid heating includes hot air puffing.

30. (Once Amended) The method of claim 3 wherein the rapid heating includes deep fat frying.

A8 33. (Once Amended) The method of claim 32 wherein step C is practiced after step B without intermediate pumping of the cooked cereal dough.

34. (Once Amended) The method of claim 32 wherein step C is practiced after step B with intermediate pumping of the cooked cereal dough.

35. (Once Amended) The method of claim 34 wherein the intermediate pumping of the cooked cereal dough is practiced with a gear pump.

36. (Once Amended) The method of claim 32 wherein step C is practiced after step B within less than 30 seconds.

A9 38. (Once Amended) The method of claim 1 additionally comprising the step of:
sheeting the extended time cooked cereal dough to form a continuous cooled and tempered extended time cooked cereal dough sheet.

39. (Once Amended) The method of claim 38 wherein the extended time cooked cereal dough immediately prior to sheeting has a temperature of about 77°C to 87.8°C (171°F to about 190°F).

A10 41. (Once Amended) The method of claim 3 additionally comprising the step of applying a topical coating to the puffed finished grain based snacks.

REMARKS

In view of the amendments made to the claims and in view of the following remarks, entry of this Amendment/Response and reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.